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National education

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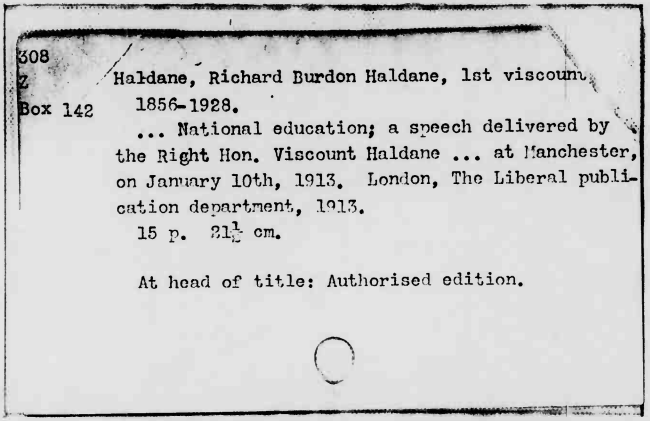

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A SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

THE RIGHT HON

VISCOUNT HALDANE

(LORD CHANCELLOR)

AT

MANCHESTER,

ON

JANUARY 10th, 1913.

PUBLISHED BY

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NATIONAL EDUCATION.

LORD HALDANE, *speaking at the Reform Club, Manchester, on January 10th, 1913, said:—*

I am glad to think that this is not the first time that I have had the pleasure of being your guest. Twice before, the first time in days when Liberalism was by no means as prosperous as it is now, I had the satisfaction of being with you. Now I come in a different role from that of my last visit. Then I was in a position of somewhat greater freedom as Minister for War. By the ancient tradition of our Constitution, dating from the time when the Chancellor was an ecclesiastic, he became the keeper of the King's conscience. Then he became in addition a judge—as I have reason to know very well. Then other functions—those of a sort of general adviser to the Cabinet—were added, and finally the Lord Chancellor is in a position when he is supposed even on festive occasions to comport himself as a grave and discreet man. Therefore, I am not going to say much to-night about the Opposition. I have other things of which I wish to talk.

The Meaning of the General Election of 1906.

It is good to look back before one looks forward, and I want to do both to-night. Looking back, I recall vividly the days of 1906. The Liberal party came into office with a great majority, which was symbolical of more than we knew. It meant that democracy had reached a new stage of development in our Constitution. But the Chamber to which I have now the honour to belong did not know that. It destroyed the Education Bill and various other Bills, and then, intoxicated by its success, threw out the Budget Bill of 1909. What was the consequence? The consequence was that, with the assent of the nation, the Parliament Act was swiftly and promptly passed.

The House of Lords must go.

The House of Lords is in a new position, quite different from any position which it has hitherto occupied. Both sides agree that the House of Lords must go. The Parliament Act inflicted a mortal wound on the hereditary Chamber. If the peerage had been content to occupy the position of moderating and yet accepting the decisions of the democracy, things might have remained as

they were. And yet to-day both sides agree—that is the remarkable fact, and there can be no question about it—that the House of Lords must go. But, I am sorry to say, that having got so far our paths diverge so far as the future is concerned. The Bill of Lord Lansdowne—of which we do not hear so much to-day—preserved a great part of the peerage. It was a new Chamber, and underlying its constitution was this—that for some purposes it was to supersede the unrestrained powers of the electors of this country. The Referendum was talked of in connection with it. Well, gentlemen, the Referendum is not just so popular at this moment. But I must say to you I am not going to dwell upon that painful topic.

The Parliament Act "but a stepping-stone" to a new Second Chamber.

We recognise that the Parliament Act is but a stepping-stone. It gives us a new position as regards the House of Lords from which to put the great question in trim for solution. Not much more. You have witnessed this year the tremendous congestion of business. And it promises to leave the House of Commons with a diminished interest in the second two years of its existence. That cannot remain permanent. We must get a Second Chamber, and it must be a Second Chamber of a very different character from the hereditary Chamber. What we have to step to from the stepping-stone of the Parliament Act must, I think, be a Second Chamber which will be in some sort a second mirror of the opinion of the country. A moderating force if you will, but a moderating force based on what the electorate desires. We need a small body capable of deliberating and deciding after consultation with the primary Chamber, capable of checking hasty decisions, but not constituting the foundation on which the ultimate decision must rest.

The Tories and Representative Institutions.

So much for the great point of contrast. You see that is a very different suggestion from the one which underlay the views of those who brought forward the Lansdowne Bill. The Lansdowne Bill had underneath it an idea which is no new idea with the Conservative party. One of Mr. Disraeli's leading notions was that representative institutions were a mistake, that you should have the people on one side and the personal influence of the Crown on the other. We know that cannot be. Nothing can be more grievous than to bring the Crown into party controversy. As for the people, what is the people except as organised in representative institutions? The people must decide; they must choose their representatives, but it is for them to work out the precise form in which the will of the people is to take effect. But Mr. Disraeli's doctrines—the doctrines of his early youth which he put forward so brilliantly—found this expression. And when he had made the Queen Empress of India he did not attempt

much more about representative institutions. In fact all such propositions must end, and always have ended in smoke. Now so far as that is concerned our course is a clear one, and if we have had a tremendous constitutional struggle in the last two or three years, it has brought out the line and direction of that course with possibly even greater clearness than existed before.

The Government and Peace.

I turn from the constitutional struggle, the first stage of which has been compassed, to the present situation, and to what has been done by that young and vigorous band which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman led and which Mr. Asquith now leads. It is not a bad record for seven years. We have kept the peace, and to-day we have the remarkable spectacle of the Powers looking to this country with confidence and disinterestedness, wishing to allay strife, sending their representatives to confer under the presidency of Sir Edward Grey, that peace may ensue. I think we have reason to be grateful to Sir Edward Grey. I think we have reason to be proud that our reputation as a peace-loving and disinterested nation stands so high in the world as it does at this moment. There is something which we were often speaking of in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's day, and that is the constitution of South Africa. You have only to contrast the situation of fifteen years ago with the situation of to-day to see what an enormous stride has been made in the direction of the highest civilisation.

The Government and the Empire.

Then I turn for a moment to the Empire. We did not talk a great deal about the Empire, but we have done a good deal. We did not talk about a policy and then not accomplish it; we did not talk about a policy, but we did accomplish it. We reached two points on which there is a common interest which pervades the whole Empire. The one is defence—and defence in the case of the Empire means organisation not for aggression but for peace—and we have strengthened the navy, we have reorganised the army. I am not going to say anything about that to-night. I shall have to take care of myself in the House of Lords shortly against Lord Roberts, and I will only make this observation, that what has been done has been done not on mere grounds of sentiment, not in any doubt as to the willingness of the people to make any sacrifice, even as to compulsory service, if they regard it as necessary, but because I thought and my colleagues thought that the highest strategy calls for a voluntary system on the part of this island.

The Reorganisation of Imperial Defence.

Then there has been the reorganisation of Imperial defence throughout the dominions. I don't think the public quite knows how much has been done during the last five or six years. I had

the good fortune when at the War Office to have as Chief of the War Staff Sir William Nicholson, who, with immense tact and great knowledge, worked out a military organisation which has practically been adopted in varying forms which local conditions demand in the dominions. We now know what Imperial defence means and how armies ought to be organised for Imperial defence. What is true of the army is true of the navy. Immense strides in that direction have been made by Mr. Churchill. It is a new interest and an interest which is binding the Empire together—this interest in common organisation for defence.

Social Reform.

I come to the greatest subject, and that is the social reform which the Liberal Government has carried during the three Parliaments in which it has held a majority. We had a very difficult task. The democracy are awake. Between the rich and the poor there was a great gap—a gap which is being more and more realised as education and enlightenment spread, and the justice of which is being challenged and rightly challenged. If you are wise you will not let such a situation get worse. You will try to deal with it. We have tried to deal with it. We provided old age pensions, and now we have a great system of national insurance which will raise the number of those who have provided for themselves from 6,000,000 to 14,000,000 or 15,000,000. In ten years, if I am not much mistaken, that measure will revolutionize the social conditions of this country. It will have placed a barrier between the great mass of those insured and the penury which comes from sickness and ill-health, and it will have done much not only to raise the social level, but to mark off that unfortunate class who have to be helped, because they are incapable of helping themselves, so clearly that we can apply to it some of the remedies which have been suggested in the reports of the Poor Law Commission. Well, the Insurance Act will be in full operation on the 15th. A few hours ago I was with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He gave me two messages, one of which I deliver to you now, and the second I will deliver later. The first was that in this world, where reason does not wholly prevail over unreason, you never can be quite sure of everything. But if you can be sure of anything it is that on the 15th of this month there will be medical attendance for everybody insured.

Some Results of Old Age Pensions and National Insurance.

That is the first. Now I read the other day a remarkable statement of a very wise man, with whom neither you nor I wholly agree in politics, Lord St. Aldwyn. Speaking of the future and of the rates, he expressed views that, given a certain number of years to old age pensions and insurance combined, we should have reduced substantially the burden of the ratepayers and improved the conditions of the unfortunate. I think that is true. I think when

you are putting a large amount, a very large amount here, some twenty millions between these two Acts—when you are putting that down on the debit side you have also to look to see what goes to the credit side. And I feel confident it will be something very substantial. But even if that were not so, surely we have done the right thing. The national income, let us call it, is about two thousand millions. It is divided into about a thousand millions which go to the labouring class, and about a thousand millions which go to another class far smaller in numbers. It is surely right and wise that a contribution of the larger part of twenty millions should be paid by them for the benefit of those less fortunate for the very purpose of breaking down that division, the continuance of which is perilous, and one which will be realised more and more by the democracy as time goes on. So much for the position as regards social reform. These are not by any means the only social reforms of the last seven years; but I pick them out as two typical reforms.

The Need of Parliamentary Devolution.

I wish to glance for a moment at what is going on at present, with a view to coming to the future. The country has been under a sense of embarrassment for some time in the contemplation of the position of the Parliamentary machine. We cannot get it to do its work. It is overloaded. What did well enough forty years ago does not serve to-day. We have got to improve our machine, and we are doing it by endeavouring to relieve the congested centre. In Parliament we simply have not time to consider what concerns all, and what concerns sections. Devolution is the order of the day, and devolution has begun with the most urgent case, the case of Ireland. I want to see an Imperial Parliament which will be free to give its attention to foreign affairs, to colonial affairs, to defence questions, and great questions of home policy which affect all parts of the United Kingdom. That is not so to-day. It will not be so until we have succeeded in the case not only of Ireland, but in the case of other parts of the kingdom, in effecting—it may be in different fashions, it may be in modes quite other than the provisions which obtain in the Home Rule Bill—a devolution which will enable us to do with Parliament what we have done in every administrative department of the State, and what is done in every well-ordered business.

The Work of the Government.

The Second Chamber is another question which we are considering. Then we are striving to give freedom as regards their national religion to a people who are part of the United Kingdom, having a distinct way of looking at things, having a genius and nationality of their own—the people of Wales—who have been touched, and keenly touched, with the force of a religious question. Let me say in passing, I think that was a very remarkable

victory in Bolton the other day, when my friend who sits on my right won an election at which the Welsh Church question and the Tariff Reform question and other questions were prominent. Then we have in hand the question of plural voting. We have also got the affairs of the Empire to consider. In that matter our policy is based on ties of common blood and common purposes, and the best interests of the Empire. There are four links that bind us together. There is the Crown, there is Imperial defence, there is the growing desire of the various parts of the Empire to meet together in conference. You have seen how admirably that has developed in recent years. And there is the question of the administration of justice. We shall probably see in the future a supreme court established as the supreme exponent of justice in the Empire. These are the four links of the Empire, links to which our attention is turned now as present-day topics.

The Strength of the Government.

Now I come to the future. This Government is seven years old, and usually a Government within seven years becomes very unpopular. You don't suppose that my judicial conscience allows me to say we have not made plenty of enemies, and I will go further and say we have given occasion for criticism. The Parliamentary majority and the Government which represents it has doubtless made mistakes, but the odd thing is that to-day we are not only strong, but we are much stronger than a Government usually is even at the beginning of its career. In the old days it would be said that a majority of a hundred was marvellous, but to-day I do not see any sign of our great majority declining. That is because we have been doing things. The Liberal party has been doing a great deal of work. One thing the country hates is a Government that goes to sleep or gets old and inept. I don't think we have become old and inept. We are strong and full of ideas. It is of some of these ideas that I wish to speak to you.

The Land Question.

One great problem with which we have to deal is that of the land. That is a question which requires a great deal of treatment, and it is a perfectly feasible problem, but it is a problem which none the less requires care, and caution, and inquiry. We are now in the stage of inquiry, and you need not pay any attention to newspaper rumours which say that we are beyond that stage. We are studying this question, and when we have collected sufficient materials we shall be able to make some suggestions. That moment has not yet arrived.

NATIONAL EDUCATION.

The Problem of the Coming Generation.

While that is true of one great social problem, there is another tremendous social problem which is now upon us. I have spoken of old age pensions. That concerns the aged. I have spoken o

insurance. That concerns the present generation. But hitherto the Liberal party has done nothing on a large scale for the coming generation. And yet the coming generation is in some respects the most important of all, because it is to the coming generation that we have to look to bear up the torch and to preserve unbroken the greatness and efficiency of this country. In these days, when, I rejoice to think, education is the order of the day everywhere in all civilised countries, other nations are competing with us and coming up on our heels, and it is not by slackening effort or being behindhand that we can do what is necessary to be done. The problem of the coming generation is a problem which we have to face. It is the problem which we have been considering, and what I am now going to say to you—I say not casually or with any light sense of responsibility, but after consultation with the Prime Minister and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Education the next Great Social Problem to be taken up.

We have decided that this question is the next and the most urgent of the great social problems which we have to take up. Of course it is education and in what I am going to say I say after consultation not only with Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, but also with my colleague and friend Mr. Pease, with whom I have been in very close consultation over this matter. Speaking for myself, I long ago took off my coat in this business. I have been for four years chairman of a Royal Commission on university education, which has in itself been a great education to me, because I have learned how unsatisfactory, owing to the absence of popular interest, is the state of education, elementary, secondary, and higher, in this country. My colleagues and I feel that the time has come when a step forward must be taken on no small scale, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer sent you a second message, that his heart is in this question just as it was in the insurance question. He is ready to throw himself into it with wholeheartedness.

Want of National Interest in Education.

Education to some has represented a religious controversy; to others dreary figures about salaries and pensions to teachers. This arises partly from the fact that the nation has never been sufficiently interested in education to stir up its leaders about it. The leaders have not thrown themselves into the question of education sufficiently to stir up the nation. I think the time has come for the leaders of the nation to make an effort. That is what the Prime Minister thinks and what the Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks.

Education an Affair of the Spirit.

How is it to be done? Education, if it is to be interesting, must be an affair of the spirit. It must be an endeavour to raise the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties of the people—of those children for whom we are deeply responsible who will constitute

the future generation, and on whose superiority to the generation of to-day depends the superiority of the country over its competitors, its growing competitors in the days that are to come. It is worth while making a sacrifice to bring about this result, and it is worth while making it the third of those great stages in the solution of the social problem with which we set ourselves to deal.

A Tremendous Question, but Worth its Cost.

Do not let us be under any illusions. It is a tremendous question—this question of education—when taken up on a very large scale. It is a costly question to take up. But I wish to point out to you that the expenditure is productive expenditure. Again, I say that in looking at the balance-sheet of this matter you must not look only at the debit balance. To have a nation such as this educated as it should be means that your charge for old age pensions will be smaller, because there will be fewer people left in that class. Your income tax will yield more, because there will be more people who can pay the tax. The taxes will yield more because the production of the country will be more. Education means increasing the power of production, and social shortcomings will be less with an educated people. If you put these things together, and if you add to them that we must increase and keep up the increase of the capacity of the country in the production of the world, then I say that the case for education on a great scale, even though it involves some sacrifice, is irresistible. No doubt this has been an expensive year. We have spent twenty millions on social reform, and I am not sure that that was not a very economical expenditure.

The Reduction of the National Debt.

But there have been savings. I went this morning to that very valuable institution, the Treasury, and I saw not only the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the permanent head of the Treasury, and I asked for accurate figures as to how we had paid off our debt. We have completed six financial years, and we have paid off on the average 10½ millions of the National Debt each year. That is a thing unprecedented in the history of the country. By March 31 we shall have paid between 70 and 80 millions of debt since the Liberal Government came into office. Think what this means in the augmentation of the power of the Sinking Fund! That is a very valuable asset for the future.

Adjusting the Burden of Taxation.

But it is not only there that progress has been made. We have lightened the burdens of those who are least able to bear burdens. I do not mean only the lessening of direct taxation. The income-tax payer who has less than £2,000 a year, often a person who has a pretty hard struggle to make ends meet, pays only 9d., in contrast to his more fortunate rich neighbours who have to pay

a little more. Then again the man who has children pays less than the man who has none, and if you look at the burden of taxation in the past seven years you will see that it bears less hardly on those who have a difficulty in bearing it, and is levied on what may be called luxuries and superfluities, and not on the necessaries of life. But though we have spent a great deal of money on social reform, I don't think we can be said to have spent money in an unnecessary fashion. To those persons who hold the dubious opinion that trade is affected by the fact that a Liberal or a Conservative Government is a power I may say that under Free Trade we have succeeded. It has been our good fortune to live in a time when the world has been prosperous. Certainly we have made hay while the sun has shone, and have been able to shift the burden of taxation so that, notwithstanding the gloomy predictions about the Budget, we are richer than ever we were before. To do these things on a comprehensive scale must cost money.

Ready for new Productive Expenditure.

On the other hand, you have got your financial system put into a situation in which you can contemplate productive expenditure of that kind when the time comes to make a sacrifice that is necessary if the next generation is to be efficient to carry on the high level of to-day. We can do it, and by saving and putting right our financial situation we have put ourselves in the position to contemplate further necessary expenditure. It cannot come very quickly; it will take time to develop.

Making Education Interesting.

Education depends on making things interesting to the boy and girl who are being educated. It has been a dull subject, and what we mean to try to do is to make it an interesting subject. I wish we had Matthew Arnold again among us to write of education as he wrote of it thirty-five years ago, and to be our prophet with his instinct for what is real and what is genuine. I wish we had him to give an exposition which would have gone far to enlisting the sympathies of many who think too little about education. You know there are a great many people who do not like education. The ratepayer does not like it, and I have a great sympathy with the ratepayer, as his burden has been very heavy. What is going to be done for the next generation must not be done at the expense of the ratepayer—of that I am certain.

Education in Scotland and Wales.

But on the other hand, if we have not Matthew Arnold we have one or two object-lessons. I come from a country where democracy is very largely in evidence, where the barriers between class and class are much less than they are here. We believe in education as a tradition. We love education, and we have a university for every million and a quarter people, whereas you

have only a university for every three and a half million. People go by what is called the educational ladder from the bottom to the top, and what has been true of Scotland has become true of Wales. The Welsh people have organised their education system so as to make it thoroughly interesting to the democracy, and the democracy subscribe to it—to university, colleges, and schools—and do things of which many of us know, and on which we look with envy.

What Education means to the Democracy.

That being so in Scotland and Wales I do not see why we should not make it so in England. But if we are to make it so we must make it quite plain what education means to the democracy. The other day a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the conditions of the Civil Service, and that Royal Commission had before it evidence from what we call the Second Division—that is to say, the clerks who enter the Civil Service at eighteen. They complained bitterly that there was a higher division class who came in at 22, and who had passed through a university, and that the best places went to the first division. There was evidence before that Commission—I gave evidence myself, and others gave evidence to the same effect—that for certain portions of the service of the State the highly educated civil servant is, as a rule, of far more value than the semi-educated. You cannot deal with a high administrative problem unless you are trained for it, and you cannot be trained for it unless you have a broad basis of general education, unless you are an exceptional man.

Equality of Educational Opportunity.

There is always room for the exceptional man. But to-day the true grievance of those who put forward the case for the lower division clerks in the Civil Service is not that they don't get the higher places but that, through no fault of their own, they are not fit to get them. They have not had the education which the State requires for the best positions. That is a great question affecting thousands of people throughout the length and breadth of the land. The answer to the complaints made is that those who complain are mistaken in their grievance. Their grievance is that there is no equality of educational opportunity for the son of the poor man and the son of the rich man, and what we have to do in the interests of the democracy is to provide equality of educational opportunity. Until we have given democracy that equality of educational opportunity the democracy will always be restless. I know no more conservative measure in the sense of broadening and making more stable, and it will do what can be done to break down the barrier which separates class from class. After all, only the few can succeed to the higher positions and to the accomplishment of the best things in life. But there is no reason why these few should have their chances exclusively among the ranks of the well-to-do. The boys and girls of the working-classes care very much for these things and should have their chance.

"We Want a National System."

Now, gentlemen, I have said this because I wanted to develop before you the problem which we have to face. When you turn with that general object in view to the state of things which exist, what do you find? I say a ready explanation of why education is uninteresting to the people of this country is that it is in a state of chaos and confusion. Nobody knows why schools are organised in this fashion, why secondary schools exist here and not there—what the relations of the universities to the schools are. When I was charged with the business of putting the War Office—the army—into order, I got hold of the best I could and put these questions:—"Will you kindly make out a list of all the things that exist and let me survey them and then ask the question, 'Why do each of those things exist? What is the hole they are supposed to fit? What is the purpose of each item and its cost relative to the amount of money to be spent?'" I found that a very fruitful mode of inquiry. That is the mode of inquiry which we propose to put to the question of the national education. We want to set up a national system.

The Necessary Conditions of a National System.

I want to call your attention to certain conditions which should be fulfilled before a national system can be said to exist. First, that a national scheme must not be merely elementary, merely secondary, or merely university. It must be one entire whole. It must be a whole, too, which starts from this, that a child ought to be made fit to receive education. A great step forward has been made in that direction. Almost concurrently with National Insurance there has been created the school inspection system, and the conditions of healthy school life and healthy child life are being studied as they never were studied before. Secondly, you must remember that although you are trying to make provision by which the child may have a chance of being a university student, only a small percentage of children will be educated up to the university. There is a phrase often used in education circles—"tops." We shall have to put "tops" on the elementary school and on the secondary school for those who cannot go to the university, which means the opportunity for children to get as much as they can out of the school beyond which they cannot go. We must encourage them by continuation schools and every means we can devise to take as much education as they can absorb. In that connection there is another point. Our views of education hitherto have been rather wooden. Education is not confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic. All sorts of other things have been added; that is all to the good, but we want still more to widen our notions of education, so that you may fit the boy or girl for the positions they take the most interest in.

Working from the Top Downwards.

I come to another thing which is most important. We must work from the top downwards. We have a wealth of high educational material which we can bring to bear. That, of course, means we may have to constitute larger areas than those of counties. It may be that we shall have to group together counties so that universities may serve as centres for secondary schools and for the training of teachers. But that will require much consideration before any plan can be made. A great deal is even now being accomplished in every direction. Let me say that the progress that is being made, and that has been made, is very remarkable. First of all you have your great civic universities. Those universities have made enormous strides. The Manchester University has made enormous strides. The Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol, and London Universities have made great strides. Newcastle, that is now part of the University of Durham, has made immense strides, and the result is that there are now in England eight new universities, which I call civic universities, for all the energy of civic life is thrown into their organisation. Then you have the University of Wales, and two more universities in Ireland, and you have four universities in Scotland. So that you have the machinery through which we can work from the top. There can be no doubt as to the success of the Act of 1902, for which I have always had a weak side. It has done enormous work to enable education to become a wider subject by altering areas and breaking down barriers between elementary and secondary education. That has prepared the ground. And, finally, as regards secondary education, which is our worst and weakest spot, something has been done.

The Question of Teachers.

Then there is the question of teachers. We depend greatly upon the quality of our teachers, and we must turn attention to improving our teachers by making the profession more popular. There are the new universities with increased scope and value, and I think we ought to be able to do something substantial in that direction.

The Religious Question.

You will ask me what about the religious question, which I have not mentioned. My answer is that if we can make education the main element, if we can put that before our minds to the diminution of everything else, we shall take the religious question in our stride. I do not think it difficult to find a solution as we go along for the religious question. Try to deal with it in the abstract and you will find yourself up against fixed bayonets, the bayonets of the Established Church and of Nonconformists; but take the thing from a larger point of view and you will find these things settle themselves and a disposition to give rather than to take in order to gain something which is essential in the interest of the whole nation and which represents what is real in our national life.

The View of the Government.

I have sketched out to you a very formidable programme, but we take the view that this is perhaps the most important of the social problems that remain—not the only one, for there is that of the land and others to deal with, but this great question of national education goes to the root of the future. We feel on ourselves as the Government a sense of deep obligation to grapple with it, and the Prime Minister and Mr. Lloyd George have authorised me to tell you that is their view. I am not speaking altogether in the air, for we have been busy with the experts for some time, and I should not have ventured to speak to you if we had not seen pretty clearly the path along which we were going. When you come to work out these things comprehensively it is marvellous how the difficulties disappear, and, speaking for myself, if the Liberal party will back us up, and, above all, if the country will back us up, I see no reason to despair of our accomplishing, and accomplishing rapidly, such a reform in our educational system as shall put us at least on a level with any other nation in the world. If we can do that we shall get back all the money we spend on it and more, and morally as well as intellectually we shall deserve well of the generation which follows us.

An Appeal for Support.

The Liberal party has done a great deal of work, and it is only because we feel that we still enjoy the confidence of the country that we can put our hands to this colossal undertaking—for it is a colossal undertaking if we do it on the largest and most thorough-going scale. It is because it is so great a task and because it appeals to some of us as a task of supreme importance that I have ventured to take up so much of your time to-night in speaking of it. We are not as young as we were. Some of us are getting white, and others are getting rheumatic, but we have still enough energy to go on for a bit. If you will back us up in this new undertaking, this new addition to the programme of the Liberal party, then I think I can promise you that it will not be for want of zeal that we shall not go on with it up to that moment when we see there are young and strong hands ready to take the banner from our hands, and to bear it along the path which we have tried to tread hitherto.

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